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Chairman: Mr. Olhaye ..... (Djibouti)
later: Mr. Niculescu (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Romania)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 100: Environment and sustainable development (*continued*)(A/54/25 and Add.1, A/54/80, A/54/98 and A/54/212; A/C.2/54/5)

(c) Convention on Biological Diversity (A/54/428)

(d) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind

(e) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (A/54/96)

(f) Implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (A/C.2/54/4)

1. **Ms. Critchlow** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.8 under agenda item 100 (e). She said that the Group of 77 and China welcomed the growing number of countries which had ratified the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and sought to secure the necessary financing for its implementation. They hoped to have regular programme budget financing to cover the costs of servicing the Conferences of the Parties during the period 2000-2001. They were also requesting Governments, the multilateral financial institutions, the regional development banks and other organizations, as well as non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to make financial contributions. The draft resolution basically sought to ensure the necessary financing for implementation of the Convention.

2. **Mr. Klopotowski** (Poland) said that his country attached great importance to the Convention on Biological Diversity because it possessed one of the largest reservoirs of biological diversity in a natural or near-natural state in Europe, and its resources were threatened by pollution of the soil, water and the atmosphere and by climatic changes and other phenomena leading to the drying of wetlands, as well as by the expansion of agriculture, urbanization and the development of transport.

3. His Government had developed a system for protecting biological diversity and restoring ecosystems. Taking into account the global and transnational character of environmental problems, it strongly supported increased international cooperation in dealing with such problems. It was necessary to strengthen biosafety within the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and it was to be hoped that a protocol on biosafety would soon be adopted. A global agreement regulating international trade in genetically modified organisms would contribute to better environmental protection and would calm people's fears.

4. Global warming would continue to be one of the major challenges of the twenty-first century. His Government's economic policy had enabled greenhouse gas emissions to be reduced by almost 30 per cent in relation to the base year. Nevertheless, additional measures would be necessary if Poland was to meet the targets set under the Kyoto Protocol. Mindful that successful implementation of the Kyoto Protocol depended on its swift entry into force, Poland, which was chairing the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, would seek to accelerate the negotiating process, which might prove to be an extremely difficult task in view of the number and complexity of the problems. He hoped that the negotiations would permit a consensus to be reached so that the Conference would be able to prepare the final decisions.

5. Poland was not a party to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, because the Convention did not address concerns related to drought and land degradation in Central Europe. His delegation welcomed the idea of consultations on a new annex to the Convention dealing with problems arising from water shortage and drought and hoped that the process would soon lead to the adoption of an additional regional annex for Central and Eastern Europe. The adoption of such an instrument could only accelerate Poland's accession to the Convention.

6. **Mr. Ibrahim** (Nigeria) said that the continued decline of the earth's biological diversity threatened ecosystems and human development. He welcomed the efforts aimed at the adoption of a biosafety protocol relating to the transfer, handling and use of modified living organisms and said that there was also a need to establish standards and guidelines to control the introduction of new technologies and products resulting from genetic engineering.

7. There was also the utmost need for consistency in implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity in relation to the World Trade Organization agreements on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. His Government was particularly interested in the protection of indigenous knowledge, regulations regarding access to biological resources, and the patenting of herbal remedies and crop varieties.

8. Implementation of the various objectives of the Convention would require States participating in the

negotiations on a biosafety protocol to resolve issues on trade, the treatment of commodities and conflicts of interest between national and international regulatory regimes.

9. His delegation deplored the fact that, despite the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, emission levels and the concentration of greenhouse gases had continued to rise. Climate change would remain one of the biggest challenges of the next century. Full implementation of the Convention must address the concerns of the developing countries regarding the reduction of greenhouses gases and other core issues of the Kyoto Protocol.

10. Nigeria attached great importance to implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification but regretted that only limited progress had been made in dealing with a problem which affected 70 per cent of the world's dryland, most of it in Africa. The international community had not provided the necessary financial resources and technical assistance for effective implementation of the Convention. There was therefore an urgent need to address the issue of inadequate resources. His delegation hoped that the establishment of a separate framework for the Global Mechanism would galvanize the international community into action.

11. Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States had shown the inadequacy of efforts to implement the Barbados Plan of Action. The consequences for small island developing States of floods, hurricanes, drought and natural disasters had rendered them completely helpless. His delegation therefore supported the mobilization of new resources to strengthen their institutional capacities.

12. **Ms. Fahmy** (Egypt) said that, like other developing countries, Egypt believed that the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in May 2000 in Nairobi, should attempt to ensure balance between objectives relating to the exploitation of biological resources and the sovereignty of developing countries over those resources. The Conference of the Parties should also consider the protocol on biosafety, whose adoption had been delayed because commercial and political interests had prevailed over protection of the environment and public health. Food security should not be achieved at the expense of the health of future generations, whether in developed or developing countries.

13. She joined in requesting all States which had not yet done so to adhere to the Kyoto Protocol to the Framework Convention on Climate Change in order for it to enter into force, especially as some international organizations were attempting to legitimize increases in greenhouse gas emissions by giving them a legal cover.

14. Her Government attached particular importance to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. It considered it the most important among the conventions concluded at Rio because it was directly linked to the sustainable development of the African continent, of which Egypt was an integral part. Her Government was concerned at the reduction in the financial resources allocated to the Convention secretariat, which was delaying implementation of the Convention. There was also the risk that the proposal to make the Convention into a framework for debt relief could delay its implementation until a solution to the debt problem, which the international community had been unable to solve for a quarter century, was found. Moreover, the Convention would be diverted from its true purpose and objective which was to combat one of the most serious ecological phenomena. Failing to fulfil the moral and financial commitments already made by delaying implementation and by contriving an artificial relationship between different aspects of development was out of the question as it would only serve to marginalize the developing countries further.

15. Her delegation also wished to stress that the bodies involved in the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification should respect it in full. The true relationship between desertification, poverty and natural resources management and the purpose of the Convention should be explored. It was appropriate to recall the preamble to the Convention, in which the United Nations reiterated the principle of the Rio Declaration concerning the rights of States to utilize their own natural resources in accordance with their own environment and development policies. Finally, her delegation stressed the need to provide in the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 the funds necessary for holding the fourth and fifth sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification, in accordance with the resolution adopted at the third session.

16. **Mr. Al Banai** (Kuwait) said that his Government attached particular importance to the environment within the framework of its development policy. Environmental issues were the responsibility of the Council on Environmental Protection, an advisory body whose mission was to gather and analyse data and provide opinions to help the Government design policy. The Ministry of Health, the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research and the University of Kuwait were also closely involved in environmental issues. At the regional level, in addition to the establishment

of the regional Environmental Protection Agency, member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council had adopted a common regime for waste management and for the protection of nature.

17. The marine environment in Kuwait and in the Gulf continued to suffer the effects of one of the largest marine ecological catastrophes ever, caused by the Iraqi invasion in 1990, during which close to 240 ships were sunk in the northern part of the Gulf. To date, the effects of the clouds of smoke and acid rain caused by fires set in almost 700 oil wells had not been fully evaluated. His Government was grateful to the specialized agencies for the efforts they had made to limit the effects of that catastrophe and restore the environment of the region. The United Nations Compensation Commission had done a remarkable job in compensating victims of the Iraqi aggression from over 90 countries, but efforts were still needed to respond to requests for reparation in the area of the environment. Since ecosystems were interdependent, his delegation appealed to all countries to respect the spirit and the letter of the international conventions on protection of the environment and to refrain from any action that could upset the ecological balance.

18. **Mr. Al Aujali** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that environmental issues were the top priority for many countries, especially those suffering from desertification, which was related to drought. Those two phenomena affected African countries in particular, which were also facing poverty and underdevelopment.

19. One of the most serious consequences of drought and desertification could be seen in internal migrations and all the economic and social problems they caused. Short of the radical solution of restoring the areas of origin and resettling displaced population groups there, one of the measures that could improve the lot of such groups would be to integrate them into their new environment by providing access to employment, housing and education. Another serious problem African countries were experiencing was an influx of refugees forced from their countries because of armed conflict. Despite the assistance provided by the international community through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to certain developing countries, the host countries continued to experience intolerable pressure, which undermined their development. Under the best of conditions, such assistance covered barely 25 per cent of the needs of refugees. The international community must therefore redouble its efforts to solve that problem by addressing its root causes and taking the necessary measures to prepare for the reintegration of refugees into their countries of origin, or failing that, to integrate them into their host countries.

20. The matter of displaced persons and refugees could be settled only with the participation of the international community as a whole in establishing plans for integrated economic and social development through increased financial and technical cooperation.

21. **Mr. Hovhannisyan** (Armenia) said that his country had always attached the highest importance to the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Armenia, which was located in an arid area with poor irrigation, faced intensive land degradation, which affected more than half of its territory. The lack of financial resources impeded the realization of scientific projects which could benefit not only Armenia, but also other countries experiencing drought. His Government had initiated a national action program to combat decertification and had signed an agreement on financial and technical assistance with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The programme's aim was to formulate the legislative basis for carrying out urgent measures, preventing further land degradation and restoring degraded lands. Decertification in Armenia had a negative impact on the whole region. That was why his Government attached special importance to regional and subregional cooperation in combating desertification. The Convention was the most important international instrument for combating desertification and drought, and constituted the most essential mechanism for providing assistance to developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Armenia therefore supported the elaboration of an additional regional instrument which would cover the specific problems of the countries of the Central and Eastern Europe region. His delegation had presented a draft additional regional implementation annex to the Convention.

22. Protecting the environment entailed significant costs. Therefore, adequate resources should be made available to the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Implementation of the Convention would help to preserve the planet's environment for future generations.

23. **Mr. Andjaba** (Namibia) recalled the importance that developing countries attached to the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa. All the African countries had ratified the Convention because of their belief that if soil erosion and land degradation remained

unchecked, the future of millions of people would be jeopardized.

24. Namibia, like all African countries, believed that the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification should be synchronized with the implementation of other conventions such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. His delegation supported the institutional role of the Global Mechanism in mobilizing resources for the implementation of the Convention, assisting developing countries to conclude partnership agreements with donor countries, and helping national governments to prepare their national action programmes. Despite the complexity of the problem of desertification and land degradation, and notwithstanding its implications for a large number of countries, the international community possessed the financial resources as well as the scientific and technical know-how required to implement the Convention to Combat Desertification in line with the principles of Agenda 21.

25. The main thrust of Namibia's national action programme to combat decertification was that the social, economic, legal and political environment should be reconciled with the natural environment in order to enhance the sustainable use of natural resources. To that end, Namibia had instituted specific rural development programmes whose aim was to increase the production of food crops and introduce environmentally sound technology and sustainable farming methods. Another programme sought to implement a nationwide framework for the management of resources designed to combat desertification and provide support to farmers and rural communities to ensure that their agricultural practices were productive and sustainable.

26. With regard to paragraph 18 of the Secretary-General's report (A/54/96), his delegation strongly endorsed decision 3/COP.2 of the second session of the Conference of the Parties concerning the provision of conference services.

27. **Ms. Quarless** (Jamaica) said that her delegation associated itself with the statements made by Barbados on behalf of CARICOM, Samoa on behalf of AOSIS, and Guyana, as Chairman of the Group of 77 and China. The special session of the General Assembly for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States had represented a watershed, since it had focused international attention on the special circumstances of small island developing States and had helped to mobilize support. Implementation of the Programme of Action was of central importance to the long-term viability of the ecosystems and economies of small island developing States.

28. The review had showed modest effort on the part of the small island developing States themselves to implement the Barbados Programme of Action, which identified many areas for priority attention, including climate change, natural disasters, fresh water, coastal and marine resources, tourism development and capacity-building. The review had also revealed that much still remained to be done. The international community should become fully engaged in the efforts of the small island States. Jamaica welcomed the support demonstrated at the special session, especially the contribution of the Government of Norway towards the strengthening of the Small Island Developing States Unit in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Her delegation welcomed that spirit of partnership, which was crucial for the small island developing States which, because of their size and vulnerabilities, were not masters of their own destiny in the international arena. They sought to secure the welfare of their people and protect their environment. However, that goal could not be achieved without the support of the international community.

29. In order to make headway in the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, work on the preparation of a vulnerability index should be concluded. The frequency of natural disasters in the small island developing States wrought havoc on medium- to long-term programmes for infrastructural development, and stalled the progress of tourism and agriculture, which were crucial to the economies of those countries. Susceptibility to natural disasters was complicated by ecosystem fragility. Sea level rise was claiming the coastlines and coral bleaching from the warming of the oceans was destroying coral reefs and, with them, the coastal resources. The economic weaknesses of small island developing States were well known: narrow economic base, low levels of diversification, heavy dependence on external trade; shortage of skilled manpower; and the brain drain. Those characteristics made them very vulnerable. In the context of globalization and trade liberalization, marginalization was frighteningly real. Preferential market access was being eroded in the name of free trade, and the small island States did not have enough time to adapt so as to benefit from the opportunities presented by globalization. She therefore welcomed the ongoing work in the United Nations, UNCTAD and other international forums on the development of a vulnerability index. It advocated the early conclusion of work on that index with a view to its application as a criterion for determining the eligibility of small island developing States for concessional multilateral

financing, and for addressing the question of special and differential treatment for small island developing States in multilateral trade negotiations.

30. The cooperation of the international community was also required on many other fronts. Thus, reduction in greenhouse gas emissions was essential in order to retard climate change and sea level rise, and to prevent the destruction of coral reefs. The small island developing States must benefit from the transfer of technology and assistance in strengthening their institutional capacities and developing their human resources.

31. At a donors' meeting, held in 1999, the small island developing States had submitted over 300 projects for operationalizing the Barbados Programme of Action. It was now essential to develop a strategy for their implementation, and for mobilizing the necessary resources. All actors in the international community, including governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, must work to achieve the goals established. Cooperation among small island developing States was equally important. In that connection, her delegation called for continued support by the international community for SIDSNET and SIDSTAP. She also expressed appreciation to the Government of Singapore for its important contribution to human resource development in the small island developing States through the technical cooperation programme.

32. The Caribbean States had taken the opportunity during the special session to introduce a draft resolution calling for the recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area in the Context of Sustainable Development. Her delegation hoped that the resolution would be adopted by the Second Committee.

33. **Mr. Iddi** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Desertification continued to prevent many developing countries from attaining sustained economic growth and sustainable development, particularly as it rendered sterile large areas of agricultural land on which those countries depended for their subsistence.

34. Desertification was a global problem. It was therefore imperative that the international community should accord the global mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, the priority it deserved. In order to be effective, the mechanism must have the support of the international community and the problem of lack of resources must be resolved.

35. The African countries requested the international community to assist them in capacity-building, particularly with regard to the acquisition of the knowledge and skills needed to combat desertification. Financial assistance was also crucial.

36. The efforts made by the small island developing States at the national and regional levels had not been adequately complemented by the international community, despite the commitment undertaken during the global conference to implement the Programme of Action. The United Republic of Tanzania included Zanzibar, an island which enjoyed autonomy in certain economic sectors such as trade, investment and tourism. It was therefore directly concerned by the problems of small island developing States and would continue to request the international community to mobilize adequate financial resources and technical assistance to help those countries overcome their development constraints.

37. **Mr. Shihab** (Maldives) expressed his delegation's support for the statements made on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States and the Group of 77 and China. Nearly ten years after the Earth Summit and five years after the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, a number of small island developing States, such as Maldives, were still struggling with extremely vulnerable economies and the threat of environmental disaster. The special session of the General Assembly for a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action had revealed that, while some progress had been made, the objectives of the Programme were still far from being attained.

38. The Barbados Programme of Action specified national, regional and international responsibilities. At the national level, Maldives had taken several steps to encourage the adoption of sustainable practices and to protect the archipelago's very fragile natural habitat. For example, legislation on environmental protection had been enacted in 1994; guidelines on waste management in the tourism industry had been strengthened; the use of fishing nets had been banned; and certain marine areas had been designated as national parks.

39. There were limits, however, to what a small island developing State could do on its own, particularly with regard to protecting itself against the side effects of global phenomena such as global warming and sea level rise. In Maldives, environmental degradation continued unabated. Beach erosion, salt water intrusion, and coral bleaching were intensifying. The efforts of Maldives to protect its

environment and promote sustainable development could not be successful without the support of the international community. At the regional level, Maldives and other members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation had made the environment a core area for cooperation. The Association had already carried out regional studies on natural disasters and the greenhouse effect and had adopted an environment action plan. Maldives was currently studying the feasibility of establishing a coastal zone management centre for South Asia. Those measures were promising first steps but were not sufficient to resolve the country's problems.

40. It was regrettable that the official development assistance received by Maldives and the majority of the small island developing States was declining at a time when it was needed most to address new environmental and economic challenges. Maldives called on the international community to honour its commitments under the Barbados Programme of Action and to establish a true partnership with the small island developing States in order to promote their sustainable development.

41. **Mr. Aboud** (Comoros) said that his delegation supported the statements made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Association of Small Island States. The most frightening consequence of climate change was sea level rise. In Maldives and Seychelles, the sea had already engulfed historic sites, cemeteries and atolls. In Kiribati and Micronesia, the drinking water supply was affected by the intrusion of salt water. Given the seriousness of those problems, the international community and the States concerned must make a common effort.

42. The small island developing States were a habitat for rare flora and fauna. Their marine and land biodiversity was very great; however, their ecosystems were fragile and threatened. The overexploitation of the marine environment and the use of traditional fishing techniques that were sometimes very harmful endangered marine resources. The urgency of the situation had led the Comoros to add an environmental dimension to its economic policy. The national environment policy was aimed at promoting the sound use of natural resources, preserving biodiversity, developing environmental knowledge, promoting the conservation and restoration of forest resources and introducing appropriate marine and coastal management. It was also aimed at defining policies on national physical planning, water supply, sanitation and waste management. With assistance from the Global Environment Facility, UNDP and other organizations, the Comoros had elaborated a biodiversity conservation project.

43. The main export products of the Comoros were traditional and high value-added agricultural products, such as vanilla and ylang-ylang. That sector was experiencing serious difficulties owing to the deterioration in the terms of trade, the poor competitiveness of farming operations and competition. And yet, in the developing countries, the majority of the population was employed in agriculture. The failure of agricultural production could jeopardize food security and impede sustainable development efforts.

44. The Comoros hoped that the deliberations of the World Trade Organization would take into account the needs of small island developing States with a view to avoiding the adverse impact of the liberalization of agricultural products on the sustainable development of those States.

45. **Mr. Diallo** (Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa) said that the Conference of the Parties had expressed the view that the General Assembly should be asked to help cover the costs of financing the Fourth and Fifth Conferences of the Parties. With respect to cooperation, the Convention secretariat had endeavoured to cooperate with United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and was in the process of concluding cooperation arrangements with GEF and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Furthermore, every effort would be made to establish coordination between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

46. *Mr. Niculescu (Romania), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

Agenda item 99: Sustainable development and international economic cooperation (*continued*)

(h) Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (*continued*) (A/54/442)

47. **Ms. Sadik** (United Nations Population Fund), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the twenty-first special session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (A/54/442), said that the special session had been considered an outstanding success

for two reasons: it had achieved global consensus through open, transparent discussion and had marked the end of five years of fruitful progress in implementing the Programme of Action of the Cairo Conference on Population and Development. The special session had benefited greatly from the guidance provided by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Population and Development and the Executive Board of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). It had also provided a framework for close cooperation among the organizations of the United Nations system, particularly the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and with intergovernmental organizations and civil society groups. Member States had participated very constructively in all phases of the review and appraisal process, providing data on the status of implementation of the Programme of Action in their countries and taking part in various technical symposiums and in The Hague Forum. The special session had adopted by consensus a document that identified key measures for the further implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action (A/S-21/5/Add.1), which validated the comprehensive approach to population and development issues and provided a set of new interim benchmarks for achievement of the goals of the Conference and reduction of vulnerability to human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS).

48. The special session had called on governments to make every effort to achieve the goals of the Programme of Action with regard to adolescent sexual and reproductive health and to include education on population and health, including reproductive health, in both formal and non-formal schooling. The participants in the special session had recognized that the AIDS epidemic was worse than had been anticipated and had expressed their commitment to taking urgent action to address the problem; they had also stressed the need to give priority to the reduction of maternal morbidity and mortality. Abortion had again been treated as a public health problem, and it had been acknowledged that the way to avoid abortion was to provide access to family planning and contraceptive methods. The participants had reiterated the four central components of sexual and reproductive health: family planning, maternal health, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS prevention. They had also recognized the reproductive health needs of women and adolescents in emergency situations and had called on governments to provide reproductive health services among other basic social services.

49. The report on the 1998 UNFPA field inquiry had shown that countries were making considerable progress towards the achievement of conference goals by, *inter alia*, integrating population concerns into development strategies; making the necessary institutional changes to facilitate implementation of the Programme of Action; and improving partnerships between governments and civil society. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were becoming increasingly involved in policy formulation, and parliamentarians in several countries were working to adopt legislation on reproductive health and rights. Women's participation at the decision-making level had increased in several countries, and various States had passed legislation outlawing violence against women and, in particular, harmful practices such as female genital mutilation. However, a number of problems persisted, including the feminization of poverty, gender-based violence and trafficking in women and girls.

50. The most serious obstacle to implementation of the Programme of Action of the Cairo Conference was the shortfall in funding, although the Conference had endorsed the sum of $17 billion by the year 2000, roughly what the world spent each week on armaments. UNFPA would strive, together with all its partners, to enhance country capacity to meet the Conference goals and would work with countries and the donor community to augment the funds available for population issues. It would continue to cooperate with the United Nations system and organizations of civil society and would endeavour to broaden the role of the private sector. It was also useful to work closely with the participants in the special sessions marking the five-year reviews of the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and Habitat II. The birth of the six billionth person on 12 October 1999 had provided an opportunity to assess the progress achieved during the past three decades and to consider measures to be taken. It was particularly important to meet the needs of young people aged 15 to 24, who numbered over a billion, and of older persons. UNFPA, which would celebrate its thirtieth anniversary in 1999, was ready to join its partners in helping countries to implement the Programme of Action of the Conference and to carry out the directives of the special session.

51. **Ms. Ameer** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, paid a tribute to the contribution of UNFPA to a better understanding of population and development issues and to an improved quality of life. The International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994, had emphasized the connection between population and development, and the twenty-first special session of the

General Assembly on the five-year review of the Conference had recognized the considerable efforts made, particularly by developing countries, to implement the Programme of Action. It was essential to increase the international financial resources available for that purpose.

52. On 12 October 1999, the world's population had reached six billion, but half of those people lived in poverty without the benefits of family planning, education, proper nutrition, safe drinking water or decent housing. The goals set at the Conference would not be reached without the elimination of poverty. The Group of 77 and China therefore hoped that the current generation of young people, better educated and informed, would play a major role in addressing those challenges. They welcomed the legislative and institutional measures undertaken by governments and the policy changes made in the areas of population and development. The advancement of the Cairo Agenda should respect the sovereign right of each country to implement it according to its own priorities and perceptions. Population and development policies based on quality of life should also incorporate issues such as poverty, food security, resource use and environmental impact. According to UNFPA, the five-year review had shown that the goals of the conference were not only practical and realistic, but essential to balanced development.

53. It was impossible to ignore the effects on development that resulted from the ageing of the population, external and internal migration, HIV/AIDS and discrimination and violence, particularly against women and girls. The Group of 77 and China therefore recommended the establishment of benchmarks in the following areas: reproductive health, maternal and child mortality, prevention of HIV/AIDS, gender equality and education. Those were the key elements of an informed approach to global population and development priorities for the twenty-first century and should be addressed in the context of an enabling economic, social and cultural environment at the national and international levels.

54. **Ms. Paivoke** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, said that the European Union attached great importance to the implementation of the actions agreed during the special session of the General Assembly. The United Nations had a key role to play in that regard, in partnership with Governments, civil society and multilateral organizations. The special session provided the opportunity to reaffirm the human rights-based approach adopted during the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994. Reproductive and sexual rights were closely linked to other universal rights. Gender equity was an essential element of the Programme of Action and much remained to be done in order to achieve the goals that had been established in order to guarantee women and girls the full enjoyment of their rights. The special session had produced many positive results: a growing number of countries had taken measures to integrate population concerns into their development strategy. It was crucial that Governments should invest in integrated health care programmes that included maternal care because maternal mortality was still alarmingly high in many countries.

55. The special session had agreed on a target for reducing the vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. At least 90 per cent of young men and women aged 15 to 24 should have access to preventive methods, voluntary testing and counselling by 2005, and by 2010, at least 95 per cent of that age group should have access to such services. Governments were responsible for creating favourable political conditions for dealing with the problem of population and development, but the European Union recognized that international resources had to be mobilized in order to support the efforts that had already been undertaken. Political commitment was a prerequisite for progress. The European Union also wished to emphasize that the population issue influenced every aspect of development and that Governments should continue to examine the economic and social implications of demographic change and the age pyramid, including ageing of the population. There was a very close connection between population, sustainable development, empowerment of women and eradication of poverty.

56. **Mr. Farar** (United States of America) said that the review of the Cairo Programme of Action had shown that the Programme was working but that some significant challenges still remained. The special session had produced a set of recommendations to help implement it, which had been successful given that maternal and infant mortality rates had declined throughout the world, the education of girl children had improved, employment opportunities for women had increased, and individuals and couples had more choices in their reproductive lives. Governments in all regions of the world had committed themselves to achieving the goals set in Cairo and to ensuring an improved quality of life for their citizens, which was all the more important at a time when the world population had exceeded six billion. The special session had emphasized the need to address the escalating HIV/AIDS pandemic more directly, since more than 33 million people were infected with HIV and there were over 8 million AIDS orphans.

57. The special session had also shown that it was necessary to pay greater attention to young people and their needs. More than half the world population, or 3 billion people, were under 25 years of age and their decisions would determine the future of the planet. Moreover, the special session had recalled that there was still an acute need for resources to achieve the objectives of the Cairo Programme of Action. The United States was still the largest bilateral donor of aid for population activities, although it had not done all it could to meet the commitments of Cairo. Its overseas development assistance had continued to decline during recent years and political pressures had caused difficulties in mobilizing all the resources needed to fully implement the Programme of Action. Nevertheless, the Government was seeking ways to increase funding for Cairo priorities and hoped to be able to restore contributions to the United Nations Population Fund. It greatly valued the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the development and implementation of policies and programmes that would allow the Cairo Programme of Action to be executed. It was glad to see that, during the special session, all Governments had renewed their commitment to the goals and priorities of the Programme of Action, the relevant aspects of the Beijing Platform for Action had been taken into account and key actions for the next 15 years had been developed.

58. **Mr. Escanero** (Mexico) said that his country's population policy, which respected the principles and recommendations of the Cairo Conference, was characterized by a long-term perspective in line with national development priorities, while strictly respecting fundamental rights and freedoms. Results had been encouraging because, over the past 25 years, the number of children in a family had declined from 7 to 2.5 on average, while life expectancy had increased from 62 to 75 years of age and the rate of natural growth had declined from 3.3 to 1.8 per cent a year. The continuation of such efforts was guaranteed by well-established national programmes on population, empowerment of women, reproductive health and family planning, together with measures to combat domestic violence. Major institutional reforms had been undertaken, as well as intensive mobilization of resources to guarantee universal access to high-quality reproductive health services, especially with regard to family planning, perinatal health, adolescent reproductive and sexual health and women's health. Furthermore, measures had been taken to guarantee and promote the equality of women at all levels.

59. During the twenty-first special session of the General Assembly, data on experiences had been exchanged, shortfalls had been measured and a series of important decisions that would strengthen the implementation of the Programme of Action had been adopted. Accordingly, it was necessary to provide more support for national efforts and to increase international cooperation and mobilization of the financial resources needed to advance in priority areas such as reproductive health, maternal mortality, family planning and reducing the number of abortions, the needs of adolescents, and AIDS prevention. His delegation was grateful for the role of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) over the past 30 years in developing an approach that integrated population goals and activities into sustainable development objectives. His Government was determined to continue collaborating with UNFPA in all areas, particularly within the framework of the interregional South-South cooperation initiative for which it was one of the four centres of excellence.

60. **Mr. Kolby** (Norway) said that the General Assembly special session had made it possible to determine specific guidelines on several issues, particularly on reducing maternal morbidity and mortality, an issue which had so far been rather neglected and one which called for specific and practical measures — which were now known to be effective — to be taken.

61. The provision of adequate sexual and reproductive health services and information for young people was also of great importance as young people were particularly vulnerable, especially to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmissible diseases, whose incidence amongst 15- to 19-year-olds was increasing. But young people often did not feel welcomed by health services generally and did not seek out the information and services they needed. Teenage pregnancies were on the rise, meaning that many girls had to leave school early and were exposed to increased risk of maternal mortality, often as a result of unsafe abortions. Future actions would help resolve those problems by reaffirming the need for youth-friendly, confidential services and for the provision of information in schools, and by giving young people a say in the planning and implementation of government programmes.

62. The goals set at the Cairo Conference were still far from being reached, but there had been manifest progress in many areas. In most countries, policies were changing and had become clearly more people-oriented. The world's population had just passed six billion, but the actual number was less important than the concern to defend human rights, improve the quality of life for everyone and achieve sustainable development. Collective ambitions must be backed up with the necessary financial resources. The Government of Norway would continue to give high priority to population issues in its development cooperation, as it had

done since the late 1960s. Norway had therefore contributed its share towards the targets of the Programme of Action as a whole. Both the developed and the developing countries should also honour their commitments.

63. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh) commended Ms. Nafis Sadik, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), for her exemplary role in the work of the twenty-first special session of the General Assembly on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. He himself had been Chairman of the Preparatory Committee and in that capacity had been led to the conclusion that the worth of any document lay in the contribution it could make to achieving specific objectives. Several United Nations bodies and a broad range of civil society organizations had participated in the round tables, technical meetings and the international forum in The Hague which had been organized with the special session in view. The negotiation had led to results, specifically to a comprehensive document containing an appraisal of the actions taken and defining actions to be taken in the future (A/S-21/5/Add.1) including in the area of the linkages between population and sustainable development. The document gave due regard to efforts towards gender equality; the need for women's empowerment; affirming women's rights; the need for an end to discrimination against the girl child; the needs of young people; and, more generally, the comprehensive achievement of the purposes and principles laid down in Cairo. Several time-bound targets had been set for reducing female illiteracy and specific aspects of reproductive health and obstetric care and for combating HIV/AIDS.

64. However, more resources would be needed if those purposes and principles were to be achieved, and it had been a surprising finding that domestic resource mobilization in the developing countries for implementing the Cairo Programme of Action had outpaced international support, which was falling further behind. Efforts must therefore be redoubled to obtain sufficient resources to implement the goals of the Cairo Conference, which would be reviewed once again for the tenth anniversary of the Conference, in 2004.

65. **Mr. Hamad** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) hailed the report of the Secretary-General (A/54/442) and recalled that by mandate UNESCO dealt also with population issues. It did so by carrying out research, information, education and communication activities aimed at encouraging attitudes favouring responsible behaviour in the population/development area, especially in the field of gender equality, the family and the environment. He gave a brief overview of the various specific activities UNESCO had carried out since 1994, including interdisciplinary projects and the publication of regional maps and manuals on population, the environment and development aimed at all levels of formal education. UNESCO had also issued a monograph on education and population dynamics which advocated education programmes in support of a strategy covering the population problem and the problem of sustainable human development. The monograph looked at the multiple interactions between population dynamics and education, in the broadest sense, and suggested how education could help raise awareness of the problems of development and demographic transition. UNESCO would continue to participate in the inter-agency mechanisms set up to provide follow-up to the major United Nations conferences, including the Cairo Conference.

66. **Mr. Malhoutra** (India) associated himself with the statement made by the representative of Guyana, Chairperson of the Group of 77 and China. India had participated actively in the preparation of the twenty-first special session of the General Assembly and in all the technical meetings and regional consultations, as well as in the Hague Forum which had preceded the special session. India had also taken that opportunity to conduct an in-depth review of the results of its own implementation of the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). The review had been reorganized on the basis of an integrated approach to the problems of reproductive and child health, which holistically emphasized health needs as well as quality of service and user satisfaction. An objective system of monitoring by professional agencies ensured that those services were adequate to meet the needs. Special efforts had been made to improve access to services and provide broader choices, particularly for women, adolescents, economically disadvantaged social groups, tribal populations and slum-dwellers. The basic principle was the participation of all stakeholders, by means of the decentralization of decision-making.

67. Concerted efforts had been made to protect the girl child. Parliament had enacted legislation banning sex determination of the foetus. Education of girls and women was advancing. The current five-year plan included efforts towards the empowerment of women through the creation of an enabling environment, designed with the full participation of women's representatives, and with legislative support and the requisite policies and programmes. Women's rates of participation at higher levels

of employment and in professional education were also increasing.

68. The pattern of population growth and structure in India showed the need to focus on the needs of adolescents as well as on the ageing population. A youth policy had been developed to provide increased access for young people to information and services, particularly in the areas of reproductive health and drug abuse, while at the same time promoting educational opportunities, particularly in the professional area. A policy for the aged had also been recently developed, covering economic support, shelter, health, and the role of the aged in development activities.

69. In pursuing the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, it was important to maintain a holistic approach. It would be undesirable to fragment the actions to be taken among different bodies. The additional resources essential for the attainment of the agreed goals should therefore be made available. India had met its commitments in that regard, but several other countries had found it difficult to do so. India especially urged the donor countries and United Nations agencies to support the efforts required to implement the ICPD Programme of Action.

70. The special session had made possible a useful identification of ways to move forward comprehensively in all areas covered in the ICPD Programme of Action. It was therefore surprising that the report (A/54/442) had not included the principles defined in document A/S-21/5/Add.1 regarding the need to sustain economic growth in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, especially by promoting an equitable, secure, non-discriminatory and predictable trading system, reducing the debt burden, and ensuring that structural adjustment programmes were responsive to social, economic and environmental concerns.

71. The economic policies of a country did not exist in a vacuum. It was therefore necessary to ensure that the international scenario remained favourable to the efforts of the developing countries to achieve ICPD goals. India continued to believe that there was an urgent need for developing countries, with the assistance of the international community, to implement programmes which ensured a level of consumption for their citizens, especially the poor and disadvantaged, that met their basic needs.

72. Committed to increasing budget outlays in the social sector, India nevertheless continued to see the 20/20 initiative as a voluntary compact between interested donor and recipient countries, and not as a prescriptive formulation. What was required was a clear perception of ways to fulfill the commitments undertaken in Cairo by totalling the cost of each element in the package. India therefore agreed with the Secretary-General's view, as outlined in his report, that resource mobilization for population activities must be placed high on the agenda if the international community was to attain the goals it had established.

73. **Mr. Babar** (Pakistan) said that Pakistan supported the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and noted that since the Conference interest had shifted from population numbers towards the idea of an overarching approach to the problems of population and development and to the deeply interlinked areas of literacy, education, health, environment, economic growth, equity and equality. More than ever, there was a need to create an enabling environment for individuals to make their own decisions on population issues.

74. Pakistan, the world's seventh most populous country, had sought to bring its policy into harmony with the objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action. The authorities had launched several new initiatives to expand access to reproductive health services. Those initiatives generally included gradual integration of family planning with reproductive health services, without fixed numerical targets and setting a voluntary approach for services and advocacy. Reproductive health indicators were improving in Pakistan, with appreciable declines in rates of fertility and of infant and maternal mortality. However, Pakistan's current population of 134 million posed numerous challenges.

75. Many developing countries were confronted with similar challenges. The concepts of the Programme of Action were being embraced reasonably quickly, as had been recognized during the five-year review carried out in June 1999, but the resources necessary to implement those concepts had not been made available to the developing countries. That lack of financial resources remained the principal obstacle to full implementation of the Programme of Action. Donor funding for population activities had stagnated and was far below the target of $17 billion that had been set for the year 2000.

76. The consequences of demographic projections were alarming for the developing countries. Over the next 25 years, population would increase by 2 billion, of whom 1.5 billion would still be living below the poverty line. The major reason for slow economic development was the lack of water. Food resources would have to double in the next 25 years to meet the demands of population and economic growth. It would therefore be necessary to prepare a

complete and coherent development financing strategy, which alone could provide a solution to those problems.

77. A number of ambitious numerical targets had been defined at the special session of the General Assembly. They could not be achieved without the attainment of the goals of development and sustained economic growth. The population problem could not be addressed in isolation. The Cairo consensus had demonstrated the integrated nature of population and development issues. Development had a direct impact on health, including reproductive health, as well as on other social sectors.

78. Population growth in the developing countries would have a global impact. The developed countries could not ignore that issue simply because they had been able to manage their population growth, and they would have to take effective measures to support the efforts of the developing countries to realize the goals of ICPD. It would be unfortunate if the breakthroughs on population issues made by the developing countries were to come to nothing because of a lack of international cooperation. Action was therefore urgently needed.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.